

Mayor's Monthly Message: August 2021

The Arizona Chapter of the American Planning Association Annual Awards Program was held virtually on August 5, 2021. The Town of Florence "Downtown Redevelopment Area Plan 2020" was awarded as the winner in the "Revitalization and Redevelopment Project" category. The criteria of the award are based on innovation, transferability, quality, comprehensiveness, public outreach, role of the planner, and effectiveness of the project. This recognition further validates the work of the Town in revitalizing the Downtown Core Area and the support of the Town Council in these efforts.

The 2021 Summer Reading Program, "Tails and Tales," has come to an end. The youth participants read over 45,000 minutes, and the adult participants over 170 books. The 4th of July Freedom Fest had 4,000+ people attended the 4th of July Freedom Fest at the Aquatic Center Multi-Purpose Fields. A total of 9 vendors participated in the event. Two inflatables were available for kids to enjoy, and the Fire Department served as a spray zone two times throughout the event. Three live bands, Pride through Strife, The Jack, and Mr. Skynyrd took the stage throughout the night. The Town partnered with the American Legion to present a Military Salute and honor a hometown hero. The Florence High School Baseball Booster team hosted the cornhole tournament, which had nine teams participate. BINGO had about 30 participants throughout the night, and the 25- minute fireworks show was the talk of the Town as citizens bragged about what a great show Florence puts on.

This month, I had the honor of presenting a proclamation declaring August 7, Purple Heart Day. On this day, we pause to acknowledge and remember the sacrifices made by brave people in the military. The Purple Heart medal is presented to service members who have been wounded or killed as a result of enemy action while serving in the U.S. military. A Purple Heart is a solemn distinction and means a service member has greatly sacrificed themselves, or paid the ultimate price, while in the line of duty. According to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, more than 1.8 million Purple Heart medals have been presented to service members since the award was created in 1782.

Our Deputy Town Manager/Town Clerk was awarded the 2021 Clerk of the Year Award by the Arizona Municipal Clerks' Association. Ms. Lisa Garcia, Deputy Town Manager/Town Clerk was awarded the 2021 Clerk of the Year Award on July 28, 2021 at the Arizona Municipal Clerks' Association Annual Meeting. Below are the comments that were read at the meeting. This is the ultimate servant leader – always reframing what they are asked to do and applying a "How can I help" viewpoint to the request. This person takes on extra assignments and special projects and exhibits exemplary leadership skills. This character revealing pattern of behavior has greatly influenced the organization as well as the community for the past 26 years. This individual is a highly skilled clerk and knows how to build a collaborative project team that gets things done. This person is fearless in embracing innovation and spends time helping others embrace change. This person supports mentorship and friendship in their municipality, the community, the AMCA and the IIMC. This individual builds strong relationships with Council, staff, the community and their peers with a supportive and caring emphasis that is highly sought after. This person served on the AMCA Board and serves IIMC, she spearheaded the task force for redistricting Region VIII Boundaries, and she also spearheaded the AMCA task force to develop the Strategic Plan that we use today. It is with great pleasure and strong agreeance that we award Lisa Garcia the Clerk of the Year Award.

The Florence Town Council established funding for the past four fiscal years for a downtown revitalization project. This project has been developed to assist property owners/tenants in the Florence

Redevelopment District. The intent of the program is to address deteriorating property conditions and encourage the use of unoccupied buildings to generate commercial activity and to prevent, detect, investigate, and enforce any violations of statutes and ordinances regulating public health, safety, and welfare. The grant program provides reimbursement of up to 75% for projects that correct documented interior or exterior code violations. The maximum grant award is \$50,000 per building. Grants are awarded based on the availability of funds, scope, and impact of the project, and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible participants include property owners and tenants of commercial buildings located within the Florence Downtown Redevelopment Area. Eligible properties must be zoned Downtown Commercial (DC), Neighborhood Business (B-1), Highway Business Commercial (B-2), Neighborhood Office (NO), Planned Unit Development (PUD), or Public/Institutional (PI). A business owner who leases a commercial property must have written approval from the property owner to participate in the program. Eligible interior or exterior improvements must correct code deficiencies as documented by the Town of Florence. Upon completion of the project, the property must meet all Town of Florence Building and Safety Codes that were in effect at the time of application. All work must be completed by an Arizona Registered Commercial Contractor. The program reimburses costs for labor and materials to complete the project. Examples of eligible activities or improvements include: 1. International Building Code deficiencies, 2. life safety issues, 3. design and engineering to facilitate project, 4. structural improvements, 5. electrical and plumbing improvements, 6. mechanical improvements, 7. accessibility improvements for ADA compliance, 8. structural components of awnings, 9. restroom installation or improvements, 10. roof repairs or replacement, 11. replacement of principal fixtures and components of existing structures, 12. renovation through alterations, additions to, or enhancement of existing structures and improvements, 13. abatement of asbestos and lead hazards and other contaminants. Projects that might exist in the Downtown Redevelopment Area, and which could be eligible for this program include installing fire alarms, fire separations, roof/truss structural issues, awning structural issues, ADA access at main entrances, ADA access for bathrooms, and asbestos removal requirements. This list is not meant to be all inclusive but provide examples of some of the real issues that we currently face. We are looking forward to the positive impact that this project will bring in our community.

As a council, we are always working hard to promote Florence as a destination. We formalized a Downtown Events Assistance Program, which is envisioned to encourage more events that promote Florence's unique history, operate (at least) annually, increase visitor traffic/tourism, and provide a positive economic impact. Awards must only be used to offset the direct cost of services, supplies, and/or marketing for approved events. The adopted Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget includes an allocation of \$25,050 for event partnership support. Financial assistance awarded via the program may be granted for up to 50% of the Applicant's approved event budget, but not to exceed \$3,000 per event. Applicants may not receive more than \$12,250 in any individual fiscal year. Funding is limited, and awards may be less than the requested amount.

In addition to this monthly message, you can find all town council meeting agendas and minutes at: <http://www.florenceaz.gov/town-council/> and our regularly scheduled meetings are the first and third Mondays, at 6 pm, at Town Hall in Florence, AZ. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out at Mayor@florenceaz.gov.

Sincerely,

Tara Walter
Mayor of Florence, AZ